



THE LINK

*A fortnightly Newsletter for the pupils, parents and staff of
St Michael's Catholic College
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St Michael's Students Receive Offers from Elite Universities

Congratulations to the Year 13 students who received confirmed offers from Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial universities in January. This is in addition to the 133 offers made to students across Year 13 from other Russell Group Universities, well done everybody! We wish all our Year 13 students well as they embark on the last few months of their studies and prepare for their final exams in the summer term.

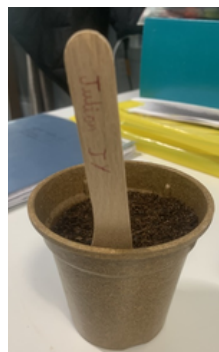


Natasha J	Human Sciences	Keble, Oxford
Caspar G	Music	St Anne's, Oxford
Ryan B	History and Spanish	Gonville and Caius, Cambridge
Thacianna T	History of Art	Corpus Christi, Cambridge
Tommy P	Natural Sciences	Homerton, Cambridge; and Imperial
Angelica R	Biochemistry	Imperial

GLOBAL GENERATION

Over the past 100 years, Europe has lost 80% of its biodiversity. This dramatic decline in biodiversity not only affects ecosystems but also threatens local knowledge, culture, and skills that are essential for sustainable farming practices. On Thursday, a group of Year 7 Geographers participated in the 'Seeds for a Better World' workshop, organised by Global Generation. The workshop highlighted the importance of biodiversity and its role in maintaining a healthy environment. Students learned about the critical need to preserve different plant species and the challenges of food security. As part of the workshop, students planted their own seedlings to take home. The session provided valuable knowledge on how local communities are working towards sustainability, and how we can all contribute to preserving our planet's biodiversity for future generations.

Miss C Hayden



Year 9 Students visit the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge to discuss the Benin Bronzes

Twenty Year 9 students were invited to the University of Cambridge in January to visit Pembroke College and to discuss Archaeology with Professor Rob Law. The students were, in particular, fascinated to see some of the controversial Benin Bronzes at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Professor Law explained that while many groups want the return of these artefacts to West Africa due, in part, to the violent way in which they were taken to Britain, there are also African-American groups that are campaigning for them to stay in the museum as they were made from materials acquired in Benin from the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Heidi, Stephanie and Anuluwa share their thoughts on this complex and important issue below:

Heidi A - Return Them!

In the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, I learned about the history of precolonial countries in Asia, Africa and South America. In particular, I was deeply fascinated by the exquisite artworks discovered, which challenged the colonist attitude/beliefs that non-Europeans were uncivilised. Acknowledging the severe hardships faced by colonised nations, I felt despondent when I was enlightened about the tragic, brutal events including the looting of significant objects in Benin.

My favourite historical artefacts in the museum were the Nigerian masquerades and the Benin Bronzes. Deeply rooted in the traditions of various ethnic groups, such as the Yoruba, Igbo and Efik tribes, the masquerades are believed to embody the spirits of ancestors or deities. Still considered as significant aspects of modern-day celebrations, festivals and rituals, these serve as a reminder of the rich history and culture of West Africa. I really liked the patterns on the masquerades and the different colours incorporated. With deeper inquiries, I also learned that the masquerades serve as a bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds, linking to the religious aspects of ancient Nigeria.

In addition to this, I was captivated by the Benin Bronzes, which are magnificent aspects of Western African culture. In the museum, these were displayed, showcasing the significance of the Oba and Ioba of the Benin Kingdom. These relics highlight the kingdom's early interactions with European traders, particularly the Portuguese. Unfortunately, they also shed light on the unfortunate, devastating history because the artefacts were looted during the British punitive expedition of 1897. Hence why they are displayed in numerous museums around the world, such as this one. In my opinion, I believe that they should be returned to Nigeria because the Kingdom of Benin is present-day Nigeria. Enlightening individuals on the rich history of pre-colonial Nigeria, I think that this idea is wonderful because it not only enables the relics to be displayed in their original cultural context but also attracts tourists, which benefits the economy of this newly emerging country. Furthermore, it honours the heritage of the Benin Kingdom and returning looted artefacts is a step towards addressing historical injustices.

In conclusion, I really enjoyed this trip because it helped me learn more about the history of different countries. In the future, I look forward to trips like this, where I can continue to expand my knowledge on these significant but often overlooked aspects of history. I would like to see the return of cultural relics, such as the Benin Bronzes to Nigerian museums, where they can be appreciated within their rightful context, celebrated by the local community and contribute to the preservation and understanding of Nigeria's rich heritage.



Year 9 Students visit the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge to discuss the Benin Bronzes (continued)

Stephanie E - Return Them!

The Benin Bronzes are a collection of intricate plaques and sculptures that once adorned the Royal Palace of Benin in present-day Nigeria. Created between the 13th and 19th centuries, these artefacts hold immense historical significance, reflecting the artistry, craftsmanship, and cultural practices of the Edo people. The bronzes served not only as decorative pieces but also as important symbols of power, history, and identity, depicting significant events, ancestral figures, and the rich heritage of the Benin Kingdom.

In 1897, these invaluable treasures were wrongfully acquired during a British military expedition that resulted in the sacking of Benin City. The British justified their actions with claims of punitive measures against local resistance, but their primary goal was the plunder of cultural treasures. This act not only deprived the Benin people of their heritage but also denied them the opportunity to preserve and share their history in their own context.

The return of the Benin Bronzes would not only rectify this historical injustice but also allow Nigeria to reclaim a vital part of its cultural identity. Restitution would enable the Edo people to reconnect with their past, fostering pride and a deeper understanding of their history while also contributing to the global dialogue on colonialism, cultural heritage, and the importance of respect for all nations' legacies.



Anuoluwa O - Don't Return Them!

Most people would say of course they should be returned, they were stolen - I initially had this thought too, as it seemed morally, to be the correct answer. However, after some deeper thought and finding out the origins of the Benin Bronzes, I now believe that the best thing to do for the future would be for them to stay in Europe/western museums.

The Benin Bronzes are a collection of bronze sculptures which decorate the palace of the Oba (powerful chief/king) and the Ioba (chief's mother) in the Kingdom of Benin which is modernly known as Nigeria. They were made from the 13th - 16th century, and depicted stories of the Oba, traditions, and events in an artistic way, which clearly showed the talent and humanism of pre-colonial Africans. The sculptures were made from materials gained by the British in exchange for slaves during the slave trade. However, during The British Punitive Expedition of 1897, the British military burned and destroyed villages along with capturing and exiling the Oba and the Ioba. Then they looted thousands of cultural objects, including the Benin Bronzes and later sold them to museums and collectors.

Before forming an opinion, think of these two questions:

1. Currently, the British museums have no control over the oppressive actions of their ancestors, and neither does the Nigerian government
2. Think of what is most beneficial to all of humanity - not only a part of it

Although what the British did was unjust, as of now, these sculptures are scattered across museums in Europe, including the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropometry, which is an accessible place for them to be. The Nigerian government announced that the rightful owner of the artefacts is the living descendants of the Oba, however, after Germany had returned 21 of the Bronzes, they have not been publicly displayed, but have been kept in the palace of the current monarch of Benin. This is a huge issue, as it is important that they are publicly accessible, so that they can inform people today on the culture of pre-colonial Africa, and can easily be studied by more people. It is important that people can have easy access to seeing these artefacts, so that more people have the opportunity know about the unique history of Nigeria, and so that they can be studied by experts and students everywhere. Furthermore, if they are kept in famous museums such as the British museum they would be more available to a larger audience, rather than if they were kept elsewhere. What will happen if all of the Bronzes are returned? Would they be seen again?

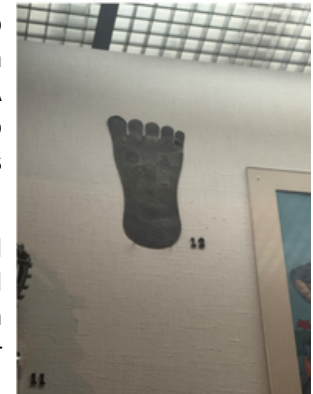
Year 9 Students visit the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge to discuss the Benin Bronzes (continued)

Additionally, it can also be argued that Western museums are better equipped to preserving artefacts for longer periods of time, as the Bronzes have currently already been preserved for over a century. This is because they have more advanced equipment and technology to do so and ensures that the artefacts are in good condition for as long as possible. As well as this, they also have specialised staff to care for fragile objects. To keep the Benin Bronzes in the best possible condition, the best place for them is at western museums. A suitable solution for this would be for the museums or private collectors to return a portion of the relics to Nigeria, once they have the proper resources to conserve them.

If the Benin Bronzes were to be returned, there are also concerns that it would lead to other nations demanding/claiming artefacts back. This not only would have a significant impact on the diverse collections of global museums, which could also have significant economic impacts for museums which run for profit.

In my opinion, the Benin Bronzes should not be returned back to Nigeria, because although morally it may seem just to return them all back to their place of origin, ultimately, for the good of the majority, and taking into account the fact that the neither the museums or the Nigerian government are responsible for the actions of people hundreds of years ago, it is best that they stay where they are not only for us now, but for the people of the future.

I like this object because it has a special meaning even though it is a footprint of Vishupad's foot. Who is a sleeping god who dreams the universe into being. And as he wakes to fight the chaos and disorder. He often touches the earth leaving his footprints and it portrays his power.



St Michael's Students in Court!

On the 25th of January, I had the opportunity to attend Young Citizen's Bar Mock Trial Competition, alongside other members of St Michael's sixth-form debate club. After meeting early in the morning at Inner London Crown Court, we began to prepare for the three rounds of trials we had been preparing for for weeks.

Each trial followed the structure of a real criminal trial (including being in a real courtroom), and was overseen by a judge, who calculated the scores of each team based on their performance. We were able to participate in the trials by becoming barristers, witnesses or court clerks, among other roles. For the first two trials, I sat on the jury for other competing schools, and was able to play a role in deciding



the verdict. We learnt about many interesting legal concepts from the judges, such as the burden of proof, or the intricacies of certain laws.

After a quick lunch, it was time for the final round of the day - I was acting as one of the prosecution barristers in an assault case, alongside Ash. Though it was quite daunting to speak in front of so many people, including a judge and jury, it was undoubtedly just as exciting as it was nerve-inducing. Following the examination of four witnesses, and multiple speeches, the jury left the room to discuss their verdict. After a few agonising minutes of waiting, we were elated when they announced that they had found the defendant guilty - a hard-fought victory for us as the prosecution.

The day concluded with a Q&A with some of the court's judges, where we were able to ask questions about how they started their careers, what their daily lives are like, and learn behind-the-scenes secrets about the court.

Even though St Michaels didn't win the overall competition, it was still a very valuable experience with lots of amazing successes.

Ruby T, 12DA

“Speaking Truth to Power”

Chief Counsel for UK's largest Media Group Discusses Politics, Law, Journalism and Life with Students



Nikki Schroeder, Chief Lawyer at Reach PLC, was an inspiring figure who motivated me and many other lecture attendees to pursue law, either by embarking on a legal career or by exploring the subject further to determine if it was the right fit.



Nikki Schoder started the lecture by explaining her life. Abandoned as a baby in a hospital and later adopted by a loving family, her journey from humble beginnings to becoming a top lawyer, allowed us to really relate to her. Despite describing herself as an average student, Nikki's life took a transformative turn when a teacher recognised her potential and coached her to gain entry to Cambridge University. She explained to us she was initially hesitant, yet went in blind and since then she explained to us that she never regrets it. She emphasised that any door that opens up we should walk through, and if we don't like the end result, we can always walk back out. We should always dive into opportunities.

Regarding the study of Law, Nikki emphasized that the field is diverse, encompassing numerous types. She stressed the importance of understanding the different areas of Law to determine which path fits most with your interests. Nikki also explained that while a direct degree in Law is one route, conversion courses also make it possible to become a lawyer after a first degree. She strongly advocated for universities, an excellent environment to develop your interests.

Nikki further delved into the day-to-day of her legal career. She described the role of a lawyer as one that requires both great attention to detail and the ability to see the “big picture”. Her own experience in the profession was filled with challenge and enjoyment, which she encouraged us to seek out in our future careers. Moreover, she explained the tiered structure of law firms, classified as Gold, Silver, and Bronze—with Gold representing the most prestigious firms that demand long hours and high commitment. This discussion helped demystify the profession, offering a realistic glimpse into the dedication required at the highest levels of legal practice.

Overall, Nikki Schoder's lecture was a compelling call to action. Her life story and professional insights not only demonstrated that success in law is attainable regardless of our backgrounds, but also inspired us to pursue our ambitions with determination and courage.

Paul B, 12BC

St Michael's Fund Raising for the Evelina London Children's Hospital

Bosco House raised an amazing £830.00 for Evalina London Children's Charity during their House charity week. This will help fund trailblazing equipment, explore pioneering new approaches, help the hospital feel more like home and support the Evelina London team to deliver ground-breaking care for thousands of children and their families. It will also help fund fantastic staff training and innovative research programmes, above and beyond what the NHS can provide.

Plus we have another £500 to donate to this worthy cause!



St Michael's Hosts National Debating Competition with The Historical Association

Julia M wins Silver Medal!

On January 24th, Opeoluwa and I had the opportunity to participate in the Historical Association's Great Debate where we delivered a speech based on our local history and how it can make a global impact. I chose to write about a political meeting at Forest Hill Swimming Pool in 1952 where Clement Atlee made a speech about the necessity for Britain to join the Nuclear Arms Race and I analysed the significance of the event on Britain's future in nuclear relations.

Many different schools attended the debate explaining their own local history and brought up topics that were important to them - from medieval Putney to current affairs of Britain like the race riots over the summer and even famous people from their area like Ada Lovelace and William Cuffay. All of these different speeches allowed us to become more educated about varying pieces of local history that we wouldn't have previously known about as well as allowing us to practice our public speaking skills which is rare and beneficial. Overall, it was a wonderful experience in which I acquired new historical knowledge and could share my thoughts and opinions on my local history.

Julia M, 12RU and Opeoluwa O, 12VI



Celebrated

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion from the USA are gone.
These are different times, but it's the same old song.
We have different names
But essentially, we're the same.
I'm included though I don't belong.

But in St Michael's it is not so.
I see a potpourri of nationalities meld together under the canopy of a
hundred flags,
I hear the laughter that is mine coming from a sister of a different hue,
I hold hands with my brother with freckles and eyes that are blue.
I see my College and I am exhilarated.
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion here are all celebrated!

Ms P Belvett

Chaplaincy Corner

What's been happening in the faith life of the school?

- Bosco charity week took place, with a record breaking £1000 being raised from a variety of activities; a cinema evening, a fun run and tuck shops. All proceeds to go to Evelina Hospital.
- January the 24th marked the launch of the Jubilee Year 'Pilgrims of Hope' in Catholic schools across the country. One of our 1st events to celebrate this at St Michael's was each form decorating their classroom with bunting with messages of hope – 7 Vicuna were the first to complete this receiving 250 House Points!
- Year 10 Young Salesian members put together and led their first assembly, on their House Salesian saints and the inspiration we can take from their example in our lives and in our interactions with others.
- The Year 12 CAFOD Young Leader representatives joined other schools in Southwark Diocese at Jesuit House for an enriching day of discussion and planning. They will share their work across the school later this year.
- Miss Casey and Year 7 Young Salesians marked Lunar New Year as part of our 'World Religions' programme with a lunchtime session making lanterns and learning about the lunar new year story.

The Word of the Lord

Leviticus –

A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be to you; in it you shall neither sow, nor reap what grows of itself, nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat what it yields out of the field

A reflection on this..

Heavenly Father,
In this Jubilee Year, we turn to you with hearts full of hope.
We thank you for your boundless love and mercy,
And for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

During this time of grace, we ask for your forgiveness
For our sins and shortcomings.
Help us to reconcile with you and with one another,
That we may experience the fullness of your love.

Guide us, Holy Spirit, to be pilgrims of hope,
Seeking your Kingdom with renewed fervour.
Inspire us to be instruments of your peace and justice,
Bringing your love to all corners of the world.

May this Jubilee Year be a time of renewal and transformation,
As we deepen our faith and strengthen our commitment
To follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Miss R Casey
Chaplaincy Co-ordinator





Upcoming Events



February

Fri 24th Back to College - All Students
 Tue 25th Morning Mocks | Selected GCSE subjects

March

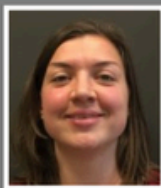
Mon 3rd - Fri 7th Year 11 & 13 Revision Week
 Wed 10th - Thu 20th Year 11 & 13 March Mocks
 Thu 27th Spring Concert

April

Fri 4th Easter Liturgies | End of Term
 Tue 22nd Back to College - All students
 Wed 23rd Year 11 & 13 Results' Evening
 Tue 29th Year 9 Options Evening

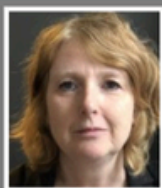


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